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S P E E C H

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX,

[Price One Shilling.]







London Published by C. Knight Dec. 11. 1791.

The Right Hon^{ble} Charles James Fox

THE
S P E E C H

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX,

At a GENERAL MEETING of the
ELECTORS OF WESTMINSTER,

Assembled in

WESTMINSTER-HALL,

July 17, 1782,

In which is accurately given the Reasons for with-
drawing himself from the Cabinet;

ALSO,

An Account of the whole of the Proceedings
on that Day.

TAKEN IN SHORT-HAND BY

W. B L A N C H A R D,

Of Dean-Street, Fetter-Lane,

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. DEBRETT, opposite Burlington-House,
Piccadilly.

THE
S P E C I M E N

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX

AND GENERAL MANAGER OF THE
MUSEUM OF WESTMINSTER

WESTMINSTER



W. B. DAWSON

1853

LONDON

Printed by J. Baskett, opposite the British Museum

GENERAL MEETING,

WESTMINSTER - HALL.

Wednesday, July 17, 1782, being the day appointed for a General Meeting of the Electors of Westminster, to consider of a Petition to the House of Commons, for a more equal Representation of the People, and for shortening the duration of Parliament, about a quarter past One Mr. Fox and the Westminster Committee appeared on the Hustings, when Mr. Fox being unanimously called into the chair, came forward, and addressed himself to the Electors as follows :

GENTLEMEN,

IT is my duty, upon the present occasion, to explain to you the immediate purpose of your meeting this day. You all recollect, that an idea has been previously suggested in this Hall, and received, I believe, with the sincere and unanimous approbation of every gentleman present, that there is an actual and insurmountable necessity, if the future preservation of the liberties of the people of this country is an object at all worth attention, that some change should be made in the parliamentary representation of the people in the House of Commons. At the time, however,

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when this opinion was originally mentioned, the period did not seem opportune for adopting any measure for carrying it into execution ; there were little grounds for any expectation that the then Administration would have taken any active part in contributing to the completion of a measure, so repugnant to their known principles, and so hostile to their interests : upon a late change, however, not the last that took place, in an administration, which, had all the members of it been as sincere in their principles, and in their attention to the true interests of this country, as some were, would still have subsisted, and, I hope, to the honour of themselves, and the general advantage of the people, the time was thought fortunate and proper for bringing this important point publicly forward, and for introducing it regularly and formally in Parliament ; in consequence of these opinions, a motion was made in Parliament by a young man of the most signal abilities, and whose public conduct had so entirely concurred with your own sentiments and wishes, that you expressed a desire for him to become one of your representatives in Parliament, proposing, that a Committee should be appointed, for taking into consideration the present state of parliamentary representation in the House of Commons ; the honourable author of this motion, I mean Mr. Wm. Pitt, supported it in the House with all that ability which characterises him, and with all that firmness, integrity, and dignity, which I believe to be no less in the number of his excellencies ; but though his arguments appeared to me unanswerable, they did not carry with them that influence in the House, which, in my mind, was due to them, and the motion was over-ruled by
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a small majority. It appeared, that the House of Commons were not yet ripe for such a measure; and the principal argument adduced as the foundation of their rejection, was this, that such an alteration did not appear to be the general or real wish of the people of this country; if, however, subsequent events have proved the contrary, have proved that this was the real wish of the people of this country, I trust we shall hear no more of such an objection.

It is for the purpose of obtaining your sentiments again upon this important subject that this meeting has been called, and I entertain no doubt that the citizens of Westminster will concur in the common zeal upon this occasion, and will readily embrace every constitutional means for bringing about an event which I think, and as all wise and candid men must think, so fundamentally and essentially necessary for the preservation of our rights and liberties as Englishmen. A worthy Alderman, a respectable friend of mine, will presently make a motion to you upon that subject, and will read I believe a petition to the House of Commons for your signing. I shall hope you will address the House in terms of respect and decency, but at the same time with that firmness and determination which the importance of the subject requires, and which becomes Englishmen petitioning for the preservation of their rights and privileges. I should wish also that your petition may be couched as much as possible in general terms; if a specific mode be pointed out, it may probably give rise to objections, and may involve in its own fate the temporary destruction of the great principle itself, upon which that mode is founded. A subject of so

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complex and difficult a nature will necessarily produce variety of opinions, even among men who wish well to the general principle, and will certainly give opportunities to those who are hostile to it, to effect the rejection of your petition *in toto*; if, on the contrary, you express your wishes in general terms, very little fear, I trust, is to be entertained that they will be properly attended to, and that the object of the Petition will be completed, for this is a clear, plain, broad truth that no man in the House of Commons will venture to deny, that a pure, uncorrupt general representation of the people is the great characteristic of the English constitution, and that the preservation of it depends upon the due and proper support of that essential quality. That it is not properly supported now, is evident to the meanest understanding, and no man will be found therefore hardy or weak enough to deny either the truth of the facts upon which your Petition will be founded, or the justice and expediency of its object.

I shall say no more upon this subject at present, but after the worthy Alderman has made his motion to you, if any conversation should arise upon it, I shall hope for the opportunity of addressing myself to you again. I cannot, however, help detaining you one moment longer for the purpose of expressing my warm and sincere gratitude, for the numberless favours which I have received from the inhabitants of Westminster. I must have had a heart callous indeed, and I trust very different from its real texture, if I could have been insensible to the various obligations I have been so uniformly and repeatedly honoured with from you. Your kindness this day, adds one more favour to the number; I am sorry I have not the pleasure of

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seeing a larger number assembled on the present important occasion, but this is a circumstance owing, undoubtedly, to the unfortunate badness of the day. Gentlemen, I have only now to add, that whilst I possess your approbation, whilst I am honoured with your confidence, I shall never fear the arts of any persons whatever. Whether they be open enemies or insidious friends, I shall equally disregard their efforts to injure me, content with the approbation of my numerous and respectable constituents, who have hitherto done justice to the motives by which I have been influenced in my public conduct, and I doubt not will continue to do so.

Major Cartwright then moved that the three following resolutions might be read; which motion being seconded by Dr. Jebb, they were read by Mr. Fox, and agreed to unanimously.

Resolved,

That the most excellent constitution of England, as formed by our forefathers, appears to us in no circumstances more grievously defaced, than in the present unequal representation of the people, and duration of Parliament, which continual experience hath proved to be no less productive of calamities to this country than depredatory of the rights of Englishmen.

Resolved,

That without a comprehensive and thorough reform of the representation of the people, and the duration of Parliament, there can neither be any radical cure of the corruption, which, after the best regulations of office, or partial reforms, may still be employed on the representative body,
by

by bad ministers, nor any permanent security against treachery or faction to the wisest and most virtuous, whose best support is from a House of Commons which springs, as ours was intended to do, really and effectually from the mass of the people.

Resolved,

That the motion made on the 7th of May last, by the Hon. William Pitt, and seconded by Mr. Alderman Sawbridge, for the appointment of a Committee of the House of Commons, to enquire into the present unequal representation of the people in parliament, having been defeated by a call for the order of the day, we consider it incumbent on us, at this time, to make known our sentiments on this subject, and to declare, that we will never relax in our endeavours to obtain a correction of the above grievances, and to transmit to posterity a purer representation, without which they can neither be free nor happy.

Mr. Sawbridge then came forward, and said,

Gentlemen,

After the business of the day has been so ably opened to you by the honourable Chairman, and after the Resolutions that you have unanimously come to; it is unnecessary for me to say any thing upon the occasion, but merely to solicit your concurrence in the following motion:

Resolved,

That a petition be presented to the House of Commons for a reform in the representation of the people

people, and in the duration of Parliament. With your permission I will read the Petition to you.

Mr. Sawbridge then read the following Petition.

To the Hon. the COMMONS of GREAT BRITAIN in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the Inhabitants of the City and Liberty of Westminster.

Sheweth,

THAT the present disproportioned and inadequate representation of the Commons of this realm, and unconstitutional duration of Parliament, are grievances of so great magnitude as to require immediate attention and effectual redress.

That your Petitioners do farther beg leave to suggest, that the observance of a due proportion of representation throughout the kingdom, is not only the natural, true, and constitutional, but the most simple and practicable mode of correcting the present defects in the national representation; and the only species of reform, that can either render general justice, or give general satisfaction, or afford a complete security for the future purity of this branch of the legislature.

And your Petitioners humbly trust this House will be pleased to consider, that in the subject of this petition is included all that can be dear to citizens and to men.

Your Petitioners humbly intreat this honourable House to take the premises into its consideration, in full expectation that this honourable House will bestow its serious attention to their complaints,
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examine their claims with impartiality, and finally afford its utmost aid in obtaining justice.

And your Petioners will every pray, &c.

Major Cartwright. I second that motion; gentlemen, it is with particular satisfaction I second the present motion, I feel more pleasure at this meeting than any other I was ever present at, because I am convinced, and have long been so, without such a reform, as is the object and prayer of that Petition, neither King, nor Minister, nor the People of this Country can be safe, or free or happy in any respect. A great deal has been said upon this subject formerly, I shall therefore have occasion to say the less upon the present occasion. The last time I had the honour to be before you upon a similar business, I took notice of two or three facts which I thought deserved your notice; there are two or three others I shall suggest, to impress the necessity of such a reform more thoroughly upon your minds.

I am given to understand, the number of electors for Westminster, upon some elections has not been less than 8 or 9000, and the whole number of electors are no less than 10,000. Upon a supposition that this is the case, I think it is well worth your consideration, to see whether you are represented in any degree of proportion with other parts of the kingdom. To set that matter before you in a proper point of view, I will recal to your recollection what I observed upon a preceding occasion, that in some districts, 13,000 freeholders choose nine members, which is an average of 1400 and some odd for the choice of two members, but

but you have only two Members, who have 10,000 electors, their average for one Member is about 706, your average is the majority of 5000 to one Member; consider what an enormous disproportion that is; — you will observe in other places a greater disproportion between the numbers of the electors and their Representatives; there are 43,000 citizens; yourselves make a fourth part of them nearly, that choose 52 Members; you who are a fourth part of that number, only choose two of those Representatives; the average in this case is, 413 electors to one Representative; yours you recollect is the Majority of 5000; but this is not the worst, as you go farther you see the evil increase; there are 41,000 electors for boroughs, small towns, and sea-ports, that choose 369 Members; the average there is only 55 electors to every Member, yours is the Majority of 5000; but it is still worse than all this, if you go farther, for taking particular boroughs, you will find 7000 electors choose 257 Members; upon an average 27 voters to a Representative; and in some particular towns, 340 borough electors choose 50 Members; upon an average of seven to every Member in those rotten boroughs and Cinque-ports, and you have no more than one Member to the Majority of 5000; therefore you need not wonder your property is made a sacrifice to those that represent those small numbers of persons; every body knows they must be subject to bribery and corruption. A great deal has been said about the representation of the landed interest, and a representation of the trading interest; I beg leave to observe, the present representation is not a representation of either, in any degree of fairness or common sense; you must conclude from what I have

have already explained to you, that in fact, the present representation is the representation of great families, who have great overbearing influence in particular counties; it is the representation likewise of the Crown, who has the command over a great number of little beggarly boroughs and sea-port towns; for as the Crown nominates Members in those places, it is the representation of the Crown, which has no business with the representation of the House of Commons; it is the representation of a great number of individuals that have purchased old houses to send themselves to Parliament; I mean, to bring themselves in independent of their electors; it is the representation of corrupt adventurers that come from the East-Indies, with a great deal of money, who have bribed themselves into Parliament, independent of the power of the electors; the use they make of those seats in Parliament, you all very well know; you have had experience in the present calamitous war, which I hope in God will speedily be put an end to, or I see no salvation for this kingdom. This Petition is to reform these abuses, there have been some objections started, I shall take notice of none but that of the impracticability, of obtaining such a reform as is now hinted at in this present Petition, for gaining a proportionable representation in Parliament. One argument to shew it is not impracticable is this, that it is not found impracticable for ingenious ministers to tax every thing you eat, drink, and wear, even to every individual pot of porter the poor labouring man drinks, and even to every pound of soap the poor washerwoman makes use of, to clean the clothes of herself and family. Now, if all can be taxed, there may be ways and means found that all may be represented; and if they cannot only tax every man, but every

every morsel of meat, and every atom of clothing, then all the argument of impracticability, with regard to making a reform complete enough to answer every purpose, appears to me the most absurd of all arguments that ever was offered. I shall not take up more of your time, having seconded the motion for the petition.

Dr. JEBB. My worthy friend, Major Cartwright, having so ably enforced the necessity of a reform in the Commons House of Parliament, — and explained the grounds and reasons on which the prayer of the proposed petition is founded, it is unnecessary for me to add any thing to what he has suggested on these subjects.

A question, however, may be asked, In what manner will it be necessary for you to act, in order to carry your wishes into effect?

In the first place it will be necessary to render the signing the petition as general as possible. —

I would recommend to you studiously to enquire into, and thoroughly to comprehend, the nature of the reform you demand; — examine into the grounds and reasons of the petition; — and if you approve its prayer — testify your approbation by your voluntary signature. — I would not, on any account, wish you to sign what you do not comprehend — nor be induced to support a petition from any other principle than a firm persuasion of the propriety of its prayer. — Copies will be dispersed in proper places. — A due degree of attention will not be wanting in your Committee; — but if you wish success, you must yourselves appear zealous in the cause. It is necessary that the signature be numerous, otherwise we shall give efficacy to the argument used against us in the House of Commons — in which it was asserted,

asserted, that the reformation requested was not the wish of the people.

A second method, by which an unarmed people can effect a constitutional purpose, is by *perseverance* and a manly *firmness* in the mode of urging their request.

It is your duty, if you be persuaded of the justice of your cause, to declare repeatedly and steadily in the ear of Parliament, that no consideration will induce you to suspend your exertions, until you have obtained substantial justice — and that nothing but the concession of your constitutional demand can induce you, without murmuring, to bear those numerous taxes, which, unless you be fairly represented, can by no means be equitably imposed. — It is my hope — it is my expectation, that in a short time one cry will go through the land — and that the voice of the People will be loud and universal from every quarter of the kingdom — that the language of every constituent to every representative will be,
— RESTORE THE CONSTITUTION OF OUR COUNTRY.

A third mode which will assist you in effecting your purpose, is, to watch diligently who those men are, that uniformly in Parliament support your cause — and who they are that have the confidence to oppose it ; — and by giving to those who support it, the fullest evidences of your approbation — treating the opponents of your just and righteous claims with those marks of your displeasure, which their unconstitutional and unworthy conduct deserves. — Be assured that public censure — for I do not mean to counsel you to any illegal act, is a powerful weapon, which cannot be wrested from you by any machinations
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of your adversaries. The most exalted peer, — however he may pride himself in the distinctions he enjoys — however elevated he may esteem his station above the common mass of the people, cannot easily console himself under the loss of their approbation and favour. This method, Gentlemen, of carrying your purpose into execution, is perfectly agreeable to the genius of the English constitution. The power of taxation resides in the English Commons — by this power the People control the Crown — this power is delegated to their representatives — but the power of CENSURE the People still retain — and thus are enabled to retain their representatives, when fairly chosen, within the limits of their duty. —

With respect to the prayer of the present petition, you will observe, it is expressed in the most general terms — it requests nothing specific — this was concerted, in order to obviate that diversity of sentiment which must necessarily take place, before the subject has been properly discussed — we state, because we all feel the grievance — we leave the consideration of the remedy to Parliament, trusting that Parliament will explore what is just and equal, and do what justice shall require. — I have no occasion to inform you, that a noble and extensive plan for an equal, annual, and universal representation of the Commons was proposed in the Upper House of Parliament, by that ornament of the human species, the Duke of Richmond — To that plan, which corresponds also to the idea of Major Cartwright, I intirely assent. — Yet, though attached to the idea of annual elections, I can, with perfect consistency, join in the present petition to the House of Commons, to take the matter into their serious consideration, while

— while, at the same time, those who are equally attached to triennial Parliaments, may, with equal consistency, unite in the same request.

I must farther observe to you, that the present is a moment singularly favourable to our views. There is a general disposition throughout England to concur in this salutary work; and we have also at the head of public affairs, a set of men who have professed and manifested a zealous attachment to our cause. It is with heartfelt satisfaction that I request you to turn your attention to that exalted character, the Duke of Richmond, who may in a manner be said to live only to effect this great, this important purpose. We have also the express declarations of the Earl of Shelburne, as may be seen in his letter to the county of Wilts, wherein he declares, that the people of England have a right to an annual election of their representatives, and an equal representation, founded upon an higher authority than any act or acts of Parliament can confer. We have, therefore, a right to conclude, that a nobleman, who so solemnly declared his sentiments in the face of the people, will, now he is possessed of power, steadily support our equitable and constitutional demand. We have also a right to declare, that if he fails in gratifying our reasonable expectations, he will justly incur that public censure, the nature of which I have before delineated, and lose all title to the estimation of his fellow citizens. In such circumstances, the most splendid distinctions of office will afford a very imperfect consolation to the Earl of Shelburne. I will also mention another worthy character now in power, and attached to your cause: I mean the illustrious son of that illustrious statesman, the Earl of Chatham.

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He has already merited much of his country, by moving for the appointment of a committee to consider our request.

With all these prospects you will be wanting to yourselves and your posterity, if you do not manifest your attachment to your excellent cause in the manner I have described. Sign the petition: recommend it to your neighbours; and declare those who are against it to be unworthy of your confidence. Be assured, if you will yourselves properly support it, no human power can prevent your success. The representation of the people is the exclusive concern of the people. To the House of Lords, particular offices and powers are assigned, with which the people cannot with propriety interfere: but with respect to the House of Commons, their business is your business, their rights your rights. I will ask you, is it reasonable that you should pay taxes, and have no controul over the men who impose them? and if you have not a sufficient controul, you have no controul. I will also ask you, if you, who are so immediately concerned in this great question, will not exert yourselves, do you expect that the King, that the Lords, that the House of Commons, that corrupt body, which is the proposed object of the reform, will effect it for you? I once more, therefore, recommend to you a firm, decided, persevering, but yet pacific conduct. Peaceful means will be sufficient for your purpose: but zeal will be required; and a firm determination to honour with your approbation and confidence only those of your representatives, who by a uniform, steady, and consistent conduct shall manifest a warm attachment to your cause.

Mr.

Mr. Fox then read the petition, which was resolved upon unanimously.

Mr. Fox then said, I believe gentlemen it will be proper to acquaint you that there will be Petitions ready for signature in different parts of the town.

Major Cartwright moved, for it to be presented by their two representatives, Mr. Fox and Sir Cecil Wray, which was agreed to unanimously.

Dr. JEBB. The particular business for which this meeting was called, being now concluded, I beg leave to offer a few reflections upon a matter of the most serious and important nature.

Under a strong impression of the calamities derived upon us from an unjust and unnatural war, the inhabitants of this city lately presented a Petition to the King, "that he would relinquish *entirely, and for ever*, the plan of reducing our *"American brethren to obedience by force."*—The changes that soon after took place in the royal counsels and the administration of this country, led us to expect that the prayer of our Petition would be granted, and the calamitous contest terminate in peace.

An event very different from the fact.

It is your duty and your interest, my fellow citizens, on whom must be levied the taxes necessary to the support of such a contest, taxes which our exhausted finances are utterly unable to sustain, to be on your guard, lest, under false pretences, you be induced to give your sanction to the continuance of a war which threatens the destruction of our country. I presume not to speak of the measures of the cabinet, except so far as those measures are openly declared; I form my judgment solely from what the Members of Administration have declared in

in the House of Peers, or assembly of the Commons; from hence, there is too much reason to apprehend that doubts and difficulties still remain with respect to the main object of our prayer. I will unfold my feelings without reserve. It is not without some reason supposed, that notwithstanding late appearances, there still exists in the presiding power of this country, an indisposition to accede to the unqualified independence of America: nor is it possible that the contrary can be ascertained, as long as the concession of this independence shall be connected with the ratification of a general treaty of peace.

In such circumstances a collateral point of dispute between this country and any other of the belligerent powers, may be held forth as the ostensible ground and reason for protracting the war. Years may pass before this dispute shall be adjusted; other points of difference may arise, or artfully be suggested by the Minister of the day, and thus the recognition of independence be suspended until new delusions shall take place, the ravages of war be renewed, and our destruction be complete.

The immediate recognition of the unqualified independence of America will be our only security against the continuance of those evils we have already experienced, or the farther calamities we have so much reason to apprehend. Such a measure will be just and honourable, such a measure also will be expedient; for in politics, as well as in the private concerns of life, justice and expediency are inseparably united.

When in consequence of the natural effect of such a measure, on the various parties in the war, peace shall be established, ancient habits of friend-

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ship and commercial intercourse will revive — the generosity of the Americans will be awakened by our voluntary acknowledgment of their independence — their affections will return. And were we even to suppose, that the terms of peace held out by France and Spain, were such as it would not become us to submit to, the neutral powers, whose interest it is not that England should descend too low in the political scale, having their envy or their jealousy fully gratified by the political separation of the two countries of America and England, would, in all probability, step forward in our support.

You, I trust, will therefore conclude, that your worthy representative has, for just and sufficient motives, resigned the station he lately held in the government of this country. Mr. Fox wished to acknowledge the independence of America in the most unconditional and unlimited terms, induced by a well-grounded conviction, that such recognition would not only be a measure just and honourable in itself, but also would be attended with the most signal advantages to this country. For my own part, I feel no hesitation in declaring, that the acknowledged point of dispute between the members of the Cabinet was not, as was asserted in the Commons House of Parliament, a *trifling shade of difference*; but, on the contrary, I am persuaded it constituted in fact the **ESSENTIAL** difference between **PEACE** and **WAR**. I cannot therefore sufficiently honour your representative for his wisdom, steadiness, and integrity at this important moment, the most truly critical that England ever knew; from my heart I am persuaded, that he has evidenced himself to be an able statesman, an excellent citizen, and an honest man.

Dr.

Dr. Jebb then moved, that the thanks of this meeting be given to the worthy Chairman, for his conduct on this day ; which motion was unanimously agreed to.

Mr. Fox then came forward again, and addressed himself to the Electors as follows :

Gentlemen,

I cannot receive the repeated testimonies of approbation which you have this day expressed towards me, without again wishing to repeat the sincere pleasure I feel from your kindness, and the gratitude with which it inspires me. I should, perhaps have said a few words earlier on the business alluded to by my worthy friend, if it had not been intimated to me that there were persons here dissatisfied with my conduct in Parliament, dissatisfied with my conduct as a minister, who intended to avail themselves of this occasion to express their disapprobation, and publicly to state the causes and the reasons for it : always happy in giving those persons who think proper to condemn my conduct, an opportunity of the most public (the more public the better) and most open explanation of their sentiments, I was willing to hear what they should be disposed to suggest against me, that I might have a fuller and more complete means of justification ; for I am thoroughly conscious that the more the charge against me is developed, the more ample and satisfactory will be my power of vindication. The worthy gentleman who spoke last, to whom I have so many obligations, and upon whose first suggestion I was originally recommended to the city of Westminster, has alluded to a petition which I had the honour

to present to his Majesty, and which was signed by four thousand of the inhabitants of that city; I had certainly hoped that that petition, confirmed and strengthened as it was by the several others which originated in different quarters of the kingdom, would have ultimately produced all the effects they prayed for. So long as I continued in Administration, you all had a right to expect that the object of those petitions would be carefully promoted, and that its principle would be inviolably adhered to. Had it been otherwise, you would have had just reason to accuse me of being an apostate to your cause, and a traitor to your interests. What will become of it now, it is not for me directly to presage; but I hope, and most sincerely wish, your petition will still find a gracious reception from Parliament, and the honest support of ministers.

The worthy gentleman who preceded me, Dr. Jebb, who, if he has any faults in the world, they are the faults of too much candour, and a too unsuspecting honesty, informs you, that you have still the promises of Ministers for the grounds of expectation that your petition will be attended to. He is willing to believe these promises. I am glad of it. I wish to shake no man's confidence: but I must be permitted to retain my own sentiments, my own opinions. I own I have suspicions. I have long entertained suspicions, as to the general political principles of your present Minister. When I became more immediately and thoroughly satisfied, that these suspicions were not barely founded, I esteemed it my duty to give a public indication of the state of my opinions, and to hold out the signal to the world, by retiring from his Majesty's service. Gentlemen, Dr. Jebb has mentioned the names of several persons from whom you have received

ceived promises upon the immediate object of your petition, as well as other matters of political magnitude. As to the first person he named, I mean the Duke of Richmond, he cannot be more happy, he cannot be more proud, in giving every tribute of applause to him than I shall always be. He and I may differ in opinion as to the fitness or expediency of the moment for retiring from his Majesty's counsels, but we are unshakenly united in our general principles, and in our fixed sentiments of popular questions. — We can never long differ, because, though an accidental difference may have arisen, as to what line of conduct might be proper or improper at this moment, I repeat it again, there is not, nor cannot be, a difference of principle between that noble Duke and me. — I revere the noble Duke's principles; and am never more happy than when I enjoy a public opportunity of giving every testimony of my esteem and respect for him. — He is an honest man, an able man, and a persevering one; though, in my opinion, mistaken in his choice of conduct at the present period. — But there is this consolation for you and me, that the noble Duke is not a man that will sleep upon his post; and whenever he has the same reasons to suspect that I have, you may depend upon it he will not a moment continue a colleague of the present Administration. — Another noble person has been mentioned, as having made great promises: — I am not much used to trust to that person's promises; — and for this reason, because past experience has supplied me with no cause for trusting him: — quite the contrary — I attend to facts, not promises; and upon that criterion you will perhaps find little foundation for confidence in the noble person alluded to.

The noble Earl, I mean the Earl of Shelburne, has repeatedly told the world he would never join any Minister that would grant independence to America : — he has said, that in no circumstances would he be induced to accede to so humiliating a measure ; — that Britain's sun was set for ever when that event should take place. — When the noble Earl used this language, it was doubtless his intention to pay a compliment, and it must be acknowledged he did not address his compliment ignorantly ; he knew how and where to take his aim, and no doubt he has taken it effectually ; now, however, that the noble Earl's object is in some measure attained ; now, for mere political purposes, he recants the whole of his former doctrines, permanently and seriously established as they had been, and makes no scruple to assert, that the grounds of his former declarations are gone, that he has relinquished his opinion, and subscribes now to a sentiment which he had formerly professed the most utter abhorrence of, an abhorrence so firmly rooted, that no contingencies, no misfortunes, no humiliation, could induce him to overcome it. If an opinion so formed, and so avowed, could be relinquished in a moment, you have reason to expect that his other opinions will not prove more sincere nor more permanent. This is one grand, obvious reason for suspicion, backed however by a thousand others which have made an impression on my mind, but which however I am not entirely at liberty to make use of here ; but gentlemen, it is not by promises by which I am governed, by which this assembly or the world in general will be governed. Let us look to performances, and what circumstance do you find not only amongst recent occurrences, but in the whole history

history of the noble Earl's political life, that can in the most remote degree tend to inspire a confidence, established upon that basis? During the last administration, I will venture to say, you had something better to look to than promises; the members, who now no longer form a part of it, not only promised, but performed; before they came into office, they engaged to bring in a bill for diminishing the influence of the Crown; What they had engaged to do out of office, they performed in it—they engaged to bring in a bill of reform, and for the establishment of general œconomy—they did so;—they had patronized the Contractor's bill, as tending to purify the popular representation in Parliament—they brought it through all its stages, while in office, and made it a law;—and without any previous engagement, they did, what in my opinion is of as much, or more consequence than all the rest, they introduced the bill for the exclusion of Excise officers, &c. from the right of voting, which struck more radically and effectually at the corrupt influence of the Crown than any other measure whatever.—Not a day passed, but some effort was made to contribute to the grand objects of parliamentary purification and general reform; and the sole use they made of the honor of serving his Majesty was, to prove, by actual performances, that they had not betrayed the confidence of the people, by vague, hollow promises, which they had no intention to adhere to. I must request you, therefore, to look to performances, and to them only.—I cannot desire you, it would not be fair, to compare the *performances* of the late Administration, with the *promises* of the present; but I do most anxiously desire you to compare the performances of the last with the per-

performances of the present.—I shall desire no better comparison—no fuller proof of the difference between us. I must beg you, in the mean time, not to be so far misled by sounding words, as to compare the actual works of one set of men with the mere verbal engagements of another. To perform, requires, perhaps, more steadiness, more consistency, more sincerity, than belongs to some men. To promise is easy; requires no resolution, no ability, no integrity. But if I am required to be influenced by a man's declarations, it becomes me to look at his character upon the whole, to examine his declarations in the whole: I must set his promises together, and ask myself, what ought to be the general result? It was reported in the news-papers, and I have received a farther confirmation of it, through the medium of private friends, that the Earl of Shelburne, in his place in the House of Lords, promised to promote a parliamentary reform; at the same time, however, that he makes this profession, he intimated a design of restoring the obsolete and dangerous practice of giving the royal negative to bills, which have received the consent of the two other parts of the legislature. What is this saying, in effect? why simply this; “so long as the Parliament is what it is; so long as it is corrupt enough to follow my dictates” (provided the noble Earl should find it so; but from some indications of honesty which the present Parliament have given, I deem that to be doubtful) “so long as they echo my sentiments, that is, the sentiments of the Minister, so long I will by no means advise his Majesty to exercise his negative. When the House of Commons acquiesce implicitly in the wishes of the King, his Majesty

" Majesty shall not interpose his prerogative against
 " them; but as soon as they shall be made an
 " honest, independent House of Commons; when,
 " by the reform that our late colleagues have com-
 " pelled us to adopt, the parliamentary represen-
 " tation shall be rendered equal, general, and vir-
 " tuous, then it will be time for me to revive
 " the custom of his Majesty's negative; then it
 " will be proper to check the opinions of such a
 " Parliament, and to devise an expedient by which
 " their honest and constitutional powers shall be
 " rendered nugatory and ineffectual. The time ap-
 " proaches when the House of Commons will be-
 " come, in fact, the representation of the people,
 " and when their language will be the genuine voice
 " of the people; but as such an event must necessarily
 " prove of all others the most unfortunate and hostile
 " to my Administration, I will hit upon a measure,
 " by which the inconvenient virtue of such a repre-
 " sentation may be made impotent and dangerless,
 " and by which I may preserve my favourite maxim
 " of arbitrary prerogative, at the same time that I
 " cajole the multitude by a specious concession to
 " their wishes, and an empty compliance, which can
 " neither benefit them nor injure me." Such are the
 gracious intentions of the present Minister — such
 the means by which he expects to establish his po-
 pularity. But what honest man can be influenced
 by such professions — professions so repugnant, so
 evidently hollow, and mutually contradictory?
 I have another criterion by which I judge of a man's
 sincerity in any specific instance; and that is, by
 considering his veracity in other cases: now the
 Earl of Shelburne has affirmed in Parliament, that
 he knew no other reason for my resignation but
 his appointment to the first seat at the Treasury;

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I give

I give you my word of honour, and pledge every thing that is dear to me upon the assertion, that there were other reasons for my resignation, and that those reasons were known to the Earl of Shelburne. Happily for me, however, this does not rest upon my single testimony: it rests upon the evidence of the Duke of Richmond; it rests upon the evidence of Lord Keppel, upon the evidence of General Conway, upon the evidence of that most upright and respected character, Lord John Cavendish, and upon the evidence of several other members of his Majesty's cabinet, who have given the most conclusive testimony to the same purport by their silence. The fact is, that the day before the death of the Marquis of Rockingham, I did, in the most solemn, direct manner, declare my intention of resignation in the Cabinet, notwithstanding that the health of the Marquis of Rockingham was at that time understood to afford more flattering expectation than it had done some days preceeding. That being the case, therefore, I am compelled to entertain some suspicions of the noble Earl's veracity. But what does the noble Earl himself say upon this subject, when he was called upon for an explanation on a subsequent day? Unfortunately there was a thin House, but the fact is sufficiently attested, so as to preclude the possibility of a doubt upon it. He said, that he had not only heard me intimate something like an intention to resign on the day preceeding Lord Rockingham's death, but *that he had often, on other days,* heard me express the same inclination. He had said, that he knew no reason in God's earth for my retiring from his Majesty's service, but that of his own appointment to the Treasury; and yet, when he comes to his justification, he acknowledges that
he

he and I had frequently differed in the Cabinet; not upon one or two points, but *frequently*; and that in consequence of this difference, I had *often* expressed my purpose of resignation. When I find a man disagree so entirely with himself, I must doubt; I cannot help it; I cannot place an implicit confidence in his assertions, nor rely upon any of his promises. The noble Earl declared publicly, that a pension, which had been granted to one of his friends, a great and enormous pension, was originally thought of at the suggestion of the Marquis of Rockingham, and was, in fact, granted by him. He has himself since acknowledged, that this is *not true*, he has confessed that the pension in question originated in himself, as it naturally must, the object of the pension being his particular friend. I do not wish to load this part of the subject, but I must mention cursorily, that every pension which has been granted since the last change but one of administration, has been given to accommodate the friends of the present Minister; there has not been one shilling laid upon the public in any shape or form whatever, for the service of any of the members of the late administration. Lord Shelburne's friends and connections have been the sole and exclusive objects of all the pecuniary grants whatever, that have taken place in the interval alluded to. I do not say that some of these pensions have not been given to very respectable and considerable men. — I am most sincerely of opinion that some of them were most justifiably bestowed; but I am bound at the same time to affirm, that they were *all* given at *his* desire to his particular friends. — I know but of three, and I could prove my assertion by a specific mention of the individuals, if that were neces-

fary.—Notwithstanding this, I myself heard the noble Earl, in one speech in the House of Peers, and it has been, I believe, pretty correctly stated to me by friends, that he used similar language in another on a subsequent day, not directly affirm, that is not his way, but strongly insinuate, that these pensions were not only bestowed at the suggestion of the Marquis of Rockingham, but that they were the conditions of some contemptible compromises which never were heard of before, nor ever had an existence but in the noble Earl's fancy. I have still another reason for doubting his promises :—I heard him repeatedly declare in Parliament, when the nature of his situation seemed to call for some exposition of his sentiments, as to the important object of reform, “ *that he would endeavour to support the system of reform upon fair considerations, provided the opinion of mankind should appear to go with them.* ” — He did not express a direct approbation of the system ; — he does not like explicit avowals of his sentiments, — he only promised a kind of conditional support, *provided the opinions of mankind appeared to go with them.* Why, he could not say less, no man could have said less — If the general opinions of the public went that way, he was obliged to acquiesce ; this does not amount to a specific declaration of his own designs or wishes — he has not in any speech I have ever seen or heard of expressed any such direct opinion, but has soothed the ear of the public with a general equivocal insinuation upon this great point, without any meaning at all. Not so the Duke of Richmond—he has made an explicit positive declaration upon the subject, which if he does not adhere to, I shall be more mistaken than ever I was
at

at any thing in the world, and more shaken in my opinions of mankind than ever I was in my life. There does not exist a man of more steady principles, nor more sacredly observant of his promises than the Duke of Richmond; no man forms a better opinion, and there lives not an individual who more faithfully adheres to all his engagements—There is one danger, Gentlemen, against which I must take the liberty to warn you, and which appears so much the more formidable to me as coming under a very specious shape indeed. You are told that if you once get a proper parliamentary representation, you have got all you have to wish for; this, Gentlemen, is not true, you are deceived when you are told so. It is most undoubted, that when you have got a proper parliamentary representation, you have got a good mean and an excellent instrument, but it is still necessary that you should attend to the use of that instrument, and watch vigilantly that it be placed in proper hands. In all monarchies, and perhaps in mixed monarchies particularly, the executive power ought to be carefully observed, and the utmost diligence exerted, that the immediate power which governs you is not only capable from talents, but proper from integrity and firmness, to exercise such an employment. Gentlemen, no equality of representation, no alteration in the duration of Parliament, no constitution upon paper or practice of any kind whatever, can preserve the just and natural consequence of this country, if the executive government is not lodged with able and honest hands. I wish you to have a true, general, constitutional Parliament, not that when you have got it, you may go to sleep and repose yourselves, as if in entire security —

not that you should be careless or inattentive to the government of your country; but for quite contrary purposes; that when you have got the just and powerful instrument in your hands of a pure and honest Parliament, you may make use of it for constitutional purposes; for watching over the executive as well as the legislative government of your country, so as that your interest abroad and security at home, be secured upon the surest of all foundations, the vigilance of the people displayed through a constitutional medium. All the misfortunes which have befallen this country, have originated principally in the want of due and general attention to this principle. The system has been to divide men against men, to separate the force of each of them, and to subvert the foundations of reciprocal confidence.

These are the practices which have existed! that they may not be revived, I wish and imprecate; I may be mistaken, but when I see the same standard reared again, under the banners of which so many calamitous consequences have arisen to this country, I thought it my duty to light the beacon to my constituents, by quitting a situation which I liked personally, which was advantageous to me, and as convenient to my circumstances as flattering to that vanity which perhaps inheres more or less in all men, but which I felt in my conscience I could not keep without becoming an accomplice in the delusion which I saw preparing against my fellow-subjects. If I have foreseen these first symptoms of danger sooner than other people, it is not because I possess more penetration than my neighbours, but because I have been placed in circumstances better calculated for supplying me with information upon these subjects; because

because I have had a nearer inspection, and am in possession of more facts, with a truer key to their fair and proper construction, than other individuals have had. All I wish of you is this, if you should find my presages justified by the event, then I hope you will do justice to the sincerity of my feelings, and the veracity of my assertions: if they are not confirmed by the event, I shall submit myself contentedly to your severity, and acknowledge myself the wretch which your authorised indignation will doubtless paint me.

I have been accused of betraying Cabinet secrets. Do the persons who advance this absurd and groundless charge, recollect that not one syllable has fallen from me upon any occasion, that in any respect affects the State, or the secrets of the Cabinet, but which has transpired in other situations, and has been mentioned by the Duke of Richmond, Lord Keppel, Lord John Cavendish, General Conway, and the Earl of Shelburne. Do the advocates for this noble Earl condemn me for the very conduct which they excuse or approve in him? or do they esteem it an advantage in him to participate, even in the guilt of some men? These are but awkward compliments, if they are intended as such; but the fact is, the whole charge is absurd and trifling; and in this instance, therefore, I shall do more justice to the character of the noble Earl than his immediate partizans have done by their silly patronage of so ill-founded an accusation.

Gentlemen, Dr. Jebb, has expressed his opinion to you, with respect to the independence of America, in a very clear and demonstrative manner. I entirely concur with that worthy gentleman on this subject, and most sincerely think

think that the independence of America, is not only a measure absolutely necessary for the political salvation of this country, but in itself considered in the abstract, a just, wise, and equitable measure. Some people represent this opinion as a humiliating, abject opinion. I think quite the contrary; that which contributes to the preservation of a state, already at the verge of ruin, cannot, in a political view be mean; — that, which restores freedom to a brave and generous people cannot, in any view, be abject. Without a complete, unconditional acknowledgement of American independence this country can have no safety; and why, therefore, should we destroy the effect of a necessary measure by an ungracious mode of performing it. They are Englishmen, — they have English habits, — English feelings; — let us do with them as we did with Ireland, and I doubt not the same effects will follow. Had we bargained with the people of Ireland, instead of granting them liberally what they had an honest right to, I am convinced we should not at this time have had that country for our friend; they asked for rights, — we said in reply, take them, they are your's — nature gave you them — we hang no conditions about the neck of justice — we trust to your generosity, and rely upon your affection. What was the consequence? — they felt the manly sincerity of this conduct as they ought; — that brave and loyal people, attached to this country from common habits and common feelings, and stimulated by the generous mode of giving them what they were perhaps before in possession of, immediately set about giving some substantial indications of their gratitude, and agreed to furnish this country with its best assistance, a large
number

number of seamen. If affairs should proceed in Ireland, as they have hitherto done, I maintain that that vote in Parliament, which granted to the Irish their just rights, and acknowledged their independence, was one of the most advantageous votes ever passed in the British Senate, and was a vote for an immediate supply of ten sail of the line — A generous, enlightened people, formed, as I said before, with English principles, and actuated by English prejudices, were sure to act like Englishmen when they were treated with generosity and kindness. — If you had stipulated and bargained with them — if you had put the possession of their natural privileges upon contingencies, upon conditions, I firmly believe, this supply of seamen would never have been obtained, and Ireland would have remained at this day, not as a part of the strength, but of the weakness of this country. This is the plan of broad, just, liberal politics that I always wish to see observed through every part of the British empire; — this is the way to treat with Englishmen — to conciliate their affections, and to dispose them to peace; they abhor bargaining when liberty is the object of the stipulation; — they will not resign the ninth part of a hair in a bargain, but will give *themselves*, if treated with candour, fairness, and sincerity. If this conduct proved so efficacious in Ireland, why should we not hope it would prove equally powerful in America? The Americans have the same principles, the same passions, the same constitution, the same nature; and I have no doubt, if his Majesty's Ministers should think proper to adopt my sentiments now that I am out of office, a solid, permanent, and advantageous treaty may still be formed with that country: but

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then

then it must have justice in its principle, and liberality in the tenor of its formation. I wish, with all possible sincerity, that they may pursue this plan — if they do not, I fear peace is very remote indeed. What will then be our situation! — an indisposition for peace, at least for the only principle upon which peace can be had, and an inability for war. Our resources are certainly much diminished; and if they were to be employed against our brethren in America, I am not certain that I should rejoice much in perceiving the means of such a bloodshed much multiplied.

The noble Earl at the head of the Treasury has said, that if the independence of America should be granted during the existence of his administration, and he professed himself of opinion that it should, the splendour of this country would be gone, its sun would be set, and his government would take place in the *twilight* of the empire. I shall not comment upon the reluctance which this style of speaking implies in the noble Earl, as to this great and necessary object; but cannot help observing, that the noble Earl's terms appear to me the best and most apposite to his situation that were ever used on any occasion. — He was aware that his administration was not calculated for the light of day; he feared that something between light and darkness would be wanted in it — An involuntary consciousness convinced him, that a glimmering half-light was full as much as his government could wisely be exposed to — that it would, notwithstanding, be as much illumined by the *light* of promise as *darkened* by the gloom of distress; and, therefore, that it would literally be an Administration between light and darkness, or,

as his Lordship emphatically called it, a political twilight.

Gentlemen, I have nothing farther to say, than to thank you once more for the constant and unremitting testimonies which you have given me of your entire approbation of my conduct. I have had the honour of serving his Majesty three months — a short period — but yet, perhaps, long enough to operate as a trial of my integrity: if, during that interval, you know of any instance wherein I have forsaken my old principles — wherein I have held one language out of office, and another in it, with respect either to persons or things, then think me a double man, and despise me. If, on the contrary, you find my conduct has been marked by an indefatigable exertion to do every thing in my power for the interest of this country in general, and yours in particular; if you should find, upon the closest scrutiny, that this has been the sole and anxious aim of my short ministerial existence, I shall then hope, that whatever may be your opinion of my abilities, you will at least give credit to my intentions, and subscribe to my sincerity.

Gentlemen, I am obliged to trouble you with one word farther on a subject that had escaped me, and that is, respecting my very worthy colleague, Sir Cecil Wray. I have had the honour of a letter from him; wherein he requests me to take this opportunity of assuring you, that he entirely, and in the strongest manner, approves of every part of my conduct; and that his opinions, with respect to America in particular, exactly accord with my own, as I flatter myself yours do also. He farther assures me, that his opinions upon that subject are

so firmly established that they must continue to be his sentiments through life.

Gentlemen, you have not had a long opportunity of experiencing the integrity and ability of my worthy colleague; — but you will permit me to say, who know him, that the longer he continues your member, the more will he approve himself an upright, able, independent senator, and an honest man.

THE END.



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